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ABSTRACT

According to the California State Department of Justice there were 182,000 reported cases of domestic violence in 1988 that required police intervention. This descriptive study, an explorative evaluation survey, examined 47 shelter programs in California to determine what components are essential to a shelter's effectiveness in facilitating lasting change in learned-helplessness behavior and ending a woman's involvement in a battering relationship. The study examined 188 categorical and continuous variables, including those identified in the literature as necessary components of shelter programs for battered women. Descriptive analyses revealed seven proposed essential criteria for determining a shelter program's effectiveness: (1) the philosophical framework advocates the elimination of domestic violence and the empowerment of women and the actual stay in the shelter approximates the minimum time required for lasting behavior change to occur; (2) the organization has a mission statement and clearly defined philosophy and goals that can be operationalized; (3) the shelter program includes a strong health education component that begins with an examination of one's value system; (4) the shelter program includes provisions for a measurement of changes in beliefs, attitudes, and self-image; (5) when the philosophical framework of an organization advocates the elimination of domestic violence, provisions for addressing the behaviors of the batterer; (6) sustained contact with former residents regardless of length of stay; and (7) provisions for ascertaining an accurate and current recidivism status of former residents. (LLL)

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Criteria for Determining the Effectiveness of Shelter Programs for Battered Women

This descriptive study, an explorative evaluation survey, examined 47 shelter programs in California to determine what components are essential to a shelter's effectiveness in facilitating lasting change in (a) learned-helplessness behavior, and (b) ending a woman's involvement in a battering relationship. The study examined 188 catagorical and continuous variables, including those identified in the literature as necessary components of shelter programs for battered women. Small sample size and large variance precluded statistically signifcant findings. Descriptive analyses revealed seven essential criteria for determining a shelter program's effectiveness.

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Criteria for Determining the Effectiveness of Shelter Programs for Battered Women

Introduction

My study was a descriptive study, an explorative evaluation survey. It examined characteristics of shelters for battered women in California to determine what makes a shelter effective in facilitating change in (1) learned-helplessness behavior and (2) ending a woman's involvement in a battering relationship. The purpose of this study was to develop criteria for determining a shelter's effectiveness.

According to the California State Department of Justice in that state in 1988 there were 182,000 reported cases of domestic violence that required police intervention; 128,195 of these cases involved the use of weapons. According to the California State Office of Criminal Justice Planning (OCJP) in that state there are 95 known shelters for battered women.

Learned-helplessness behavior is a characteristic of battered women. The literature indicates that lasting change in learned-helplessness behavior requires a minimum of 70 to 90 days of sustained intervention (Bibliography: 1, 2,). Most shelters in California are short term shelters, i.e., the maximum stay allowed is less than 70 days.

Four research questions were developed:

1. What are the differences between short term and long term shelters?
2. What interventions are being used to facilitate lasting behavior change in women with learned-helplessness behavior?
3. How are shelter programs measuring intervention outcomes?
4. What are the criteria for measuring the effectiveness of shelters for battered women?

Methods

Access to the target population was gained through confidential mailing lists provided by OCJP and the California Coalitions Against Domestic Violence. I developed a survey questionnaire that addressed ten areas:

1. Type of shelter (maximum stay allowed)
2. Demographics
3. Shelter facility
4. Organizational structure
5. Involvement of law enforcement
6. Funding
7. Intervention program
8. Diversion group for the batterer
9. Follow-up
10. Recidivism

Questionnaires were mailed to directors of all known shelters in California. Forty-seven responded, a response rate of 49.5%. The study sample represented half of all known shelters in the state.

Shelters were grouped according to shelter policy regarding the maximum length of time that a woman was allowed to remain in shelter. Initially shelters fell into seven groups:

1. 24 to 72 hours (n=2)
2. 4 to 30 days (n=16)
3. 31 to 45 days (n=17)
4. 46 to 60 days (n=7)
5. 61 to 90 days (n=2)
6. 91 to 180 days (n=1)
7. 181 to 365 days (n=2).

Among the shelters with a maximum stay of 28 to 45 days there were six that provided sustained follow-up contact with former residents for 3 months or longer which, in terms of behavior change, met the criteria for long term shelters.

There were 29 shelters that allowed a maximum stay of 45 days or less without sustained follow-up contact. These were defined as short term. There were 18 shelters that allowed a maximum stay greater than 45 days, or provided sustained follow-up contact for 3 months or more. These were defined as long term. (Table 1)

Statistical analyses were done comparing these two groups on 188 variables addressed in the questionnaire, and 73 variables derived from the data.

TABLE 1 - GROUPING OF TYPES OF SHELTERS BY MAXIMUM STAY ALLOWED

Primary Grouping

1.	24 hours to 72 hours	n=2
2.	4 days to 30 days	n=16*
3.	31 days to 45 days	n=17*
(data-defined division of "short term" and "long term")		
4.	46 days to 60 days	n=7
5.	61 days to 90 days	n=2
6.	91 days to 180 days	n=1
7.	181 days to 365 days	n=2
	Total sample	n=47

*Within Groups 2 and 3 there are six shelters with reported sustained follow-up contact of at least 3 months. These meet the study criteria for long-term shelter and will be included in the long-term group.

Final Grouping in Two Major Groups

1.	SHORT TERM	n=29
2.	LONG TERM	n=18
	Total sample	n=47

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Discussion of Results and Proposed Criteria for Determining Shelter Program Effectiveness

The data showed three unexpected findings: (1) the lack of uniformity both between groups of short term shelters and long term shelters, and within groups of similar shelters; (2) the maximum stay as an inappropriate measure of a woman's actual stay in shelter, and (3) the weaknesses in follow-up as major contributors in unreliable recidivism data.

Type of Shelter

The maximum stay allowed did not reflect the actual time that women remain in shelter (Table 2). The average stay appeared to increase as maximum stay increased, but no shelter reported an average stay equal to the maximum allowed. Only one shelter reported an average stay that met the minimum required for lasting behavior change to occur (Figure 1).

Criterion No. 1

When the philosophical framework of a shelter organization advocates the elimination of domestic violence and the empowerment of women, then the actual stay in shelter approximates the minimum time required for lasting behavior change to occur.

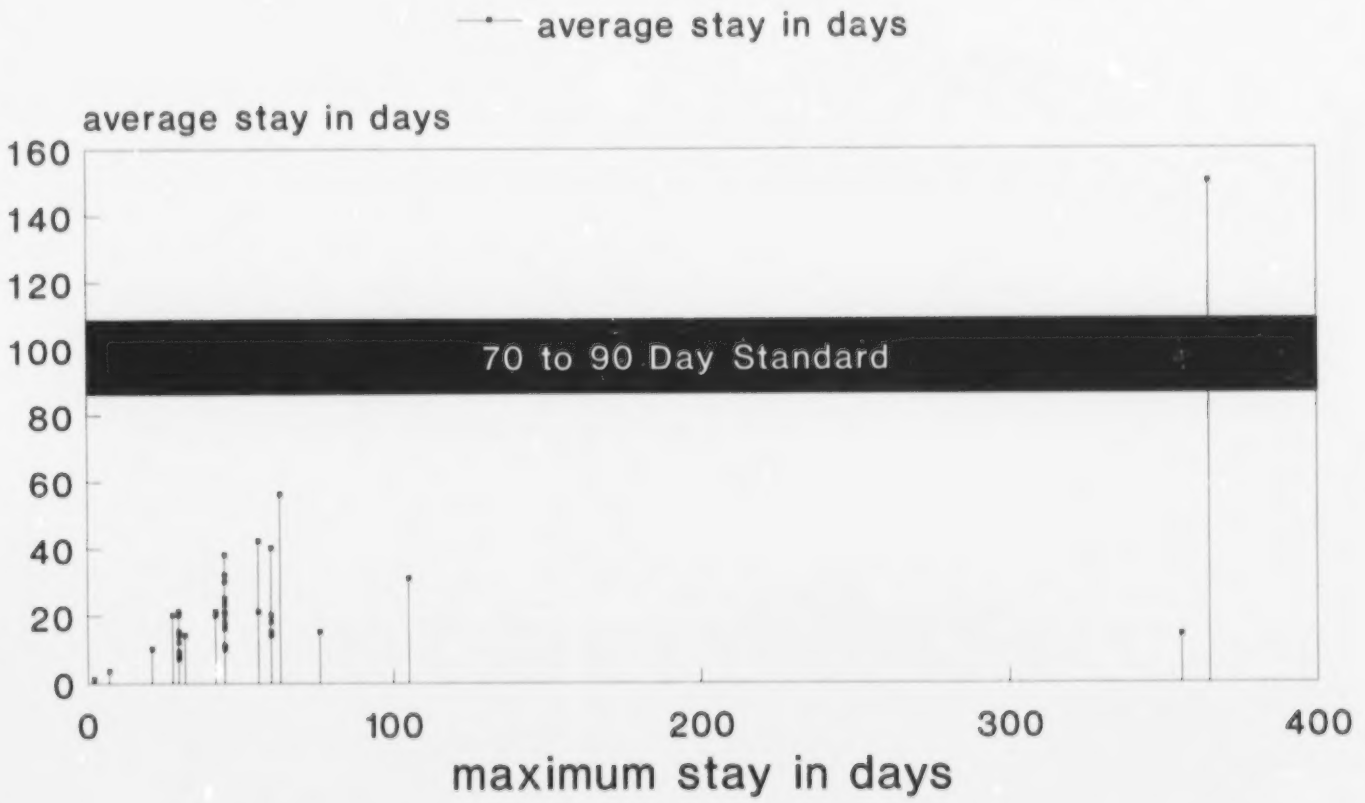
Organizational Mission

Forty-four percent of the respondents stated that they had a formal written statement of mission, philosophy, purpose, and

TABLE 2 - Reported Average Stay

TYPE OF SHELTER	MEAN	RANGE	SD
All Shelters n=47	22.3	1 to 150	21.9
All Shelters with Outlier (150) Removed n=46	19.4	1 to 56	10.4
Short Term n=29	16.4	1 to 32	7.5
Short Term with Outliers (24 Hour to 72 Hour Emergency Shelters) Removed n=27	16.98	4 to 32	6.96
Long Term n=18	31.3	8 to 150	32.1
Long Term with Outlier (150) Removed n=17	24.4	8 to 56	12.8
Long Term with Maximum Stay Greater Than 45 Days (with Outlier Removed) n=11	26.0	14 to 56	14.3
Six Shelters with Maximum Stay of 45 days or Less and Sustained Follow-up Contact	21.3	8 to 38	10.0

Figure 1 - Average Stay by Maximum Stay



goals. However, only 11 (23.4%) demonstrated an understanding of philosophy, and 21 stated goals in a proper context. Others tended to express these concepts as purpose. The two most frequently mentioned issues were the elimination of domestic violence and the empowerment of women. Only six (12.8%0 shelters showed congruence between a philosophy and a corresponding goal. (Table 3)

Criterion No. 2

The organization has a mission statement and clearly defined philosophy and goals that can be operationalized.

Interventions

Interventions were categorized as service, education, therapy, or support (Table 4). All shelters reported offering interventions that were identified in the literature as important for facilitating behavior change (Bibliography: 2 thru 17). There was no way to determine the degree to which these interventions were used or how successful they were. By definition all shelters in the study offered a safe haven. All shelters offered a period of reflection, and peer-counseling. Only three shelters offered psychological testing on admission (pre-test), while two followed with psychological testing on exit (post-test).

Criterion No. 3

In addition to service and therapy interventions, the shelter program includes a strong health education component that begins

TABLE 3 - No. (%) of Shelters Reporting Organizational Philosophy and Goals

Mission	All Shelters n=47	Short Term n=29	Long Term n=18
Philosophy:			
A life free of violence is a birthright.	9 (19.1%)	7 (24.1%)	2 (11.8%)
Empowerment of women is a means to end domestic violence.	3 (6.4%)	2 (6.9%)	1 (5.6%)
Lifestyle and behavior change is necessary to end domestic violence.	3 (6.4%)	2 (6.9%)	1 (5.6%)
Sustained involvement with the shelter program decreases risk of return to a battering relationship.	2 (4.3%)	0	2 (11.1%)
It is not the role of shelter staff to make judgements regarding return to a partner.	1 (2.1%)	0	1 (5.6%)
Battered women are not the cause of their abuse.	4 (8.5%)	3 (10.3%)	1 (5.6%)
Goals:			
The elimination of domestic violence.	23 (48.9%)	15 (51.7%)	8 (44.4%)
Empowerment of women.	18 (38.3%)	10 (34.5%)	8 (44.4%)
Improved quality of life.	10 (21.3%)	3 (10.3%)	7 (38.9%)
Sustained contact.	2 (4.3%)	0	2 (11.1%)
Elimination of sexism and racism.	4 (8.5%)	3 (10.3%)	1 (5.6%)
Advocacy for specific women's groups.	2 (4.3%)	1 (3.4%)	1 (5.6%)

TABLE 4 - Interventions Categorized as Service, Education, Therapy, or Support Focus; and Number of Shelters Offering an Intervention

		Shelters No./%
SERVICE FOCUS		
1.	A safe haven	47/100.0%
2.	A period of rest	46/97.9%
3.	A period of calm respite free of childcare responsibilities.	24/51.1%
4.	Legal assistance.	42/89.4%
5.	Financial assistance	40.85.1%
6.	Preparation of resume (prepared for the client)	18/38.3%
7.	Preparation for securing job, housing, and child care.	40/85.1%
EDUCATION FOCUS		
1.	A period of reflection regarding one's beliefs, attitudes, anxieties, expectations, and/or coping patterns. (A first step in clarifying values.)	47/100%
2.	Health education including hygiene, nutrition, parenting, living skills, coping strategies.	45/95.7%
3.	Participation in meal planning/ grocery shopping/meal preparation.	40/85.1%
4.	Co-parenting (role-modeling and practice in parenting skills).	29/61.7%
5.	Values Clarification.	39/83.0%
6.	Assertiveness training.	38/80.9%
7.	Mediation/arbitration (addressing problems of living in-shelter).	40/85.1%
8.	Transitional housing or other setting in which to practice independent living skills (practice phase of social learning).	17/36.2%
9.	On-site education courses (e.g. GED	8/17.0%
10.	Off-site education courses (e.g. ROP, high school, community college).	19/40.4%
11.	Vocational training.	10/21.3%
12.	Involvement in staff positions on-site (practice phase in vocational training)	4/8.5%
13.	Preparation for job interview (learning how).	27/57.4%
THERAPY FOCUS		
1.	Psychological testing on admission.	3/6.4%
2.	Medical assistance/treatment.	29/61.7%
3.	Psychological assistance/treatment.	29/61.7%
4.	Group therapy.	42/89.4%
5.	Exit psychological testing.	2/4.3%
SUPPORT FOCUS		
1.	Peer Counseling.	47/100%

with an examination of one's value system.

Criterion No. 4

As a measurement of effectiveness in facilitating empowerment, the shelter program includes provisions for a measurement of changes in beliefs, attitudes, and self-image. (Pre-testing and post-testing.)

Diversion Groups for Batterers

Twenty-six (55.3%) respondents reported networking with diversion groups for batterers, 15 (51.7%) of short term and 11 (61.1%) of long term shelters. A goal of shelters in the study sample was resolution of the battering relationship, not dissolution of the marriage. If the woman chooses not to return to her abusive partner, he is likely to attach to another woman-victim (Bibliography: 4, 5). This will not eliminate domestic violence, only rearrange the partners.

Criterion No. 5

When the philosophical framework of a shelter organization advocates the elimination of domestic violence, then there are provisions for addressing the behaviors of the batterer.

Follow-up

Provisions for follow-up contact varied. Although most respondents (62.1% of short term and 94.4% of long term shelters)

provided data regarding the number of former residents contacted, there were great variations in the length of time that contact was maintained, both within a given shelter and within groups of shelters. Over half of the respondents (55.3%) stated that the length of time varied too much to report. A 1989 study by Ortiz (Bibliography: 19) emphasizes the importance of follow-up contact for both the former resident and the shelter organization.

Criterion No. 6

A shelter program has sustained contact with former residents regardless of length of stay. This serves three purposes: (a) it perpetuates the woman's support system, (b) it provides reinforcement of behaviors necessary to maintain a life-style free of violence and/or coercion, and (c) it provides a method of obtaining accurate and current recidivism data.

Recidivism

Twenty-nine (61.7%) respondents provided recidivism data. The data was not included in data analysis because the method of calculation could not be determined; and nine respondents qualified their data as (a) observed, but not actually calculated, (b) approximate, and/or (c) a guess; or (d) it was stated as a range quoted from the literature. There appeared to be no standardized method for obtaining or calculating recidivism data. With the exception of one case, there was little in the data to indicate follow-up contact was a source of recidivism data.

Criterion No. 7

The shelter has provisions for ascertaining accurate and current recidivism status of former residents. This is made possible by sustained follow-up contact. Without recidivism data there is little chance of accurately determining a shelter program's effectiveness in (a) empowering women that they might choose a life free of violence and coercion, and (b) reducing the prevalence of domestic violence.

Summary

There appeared to be no standardization among the shelters in this study, short term or long term. Although they reported offering specific interventions, there appeared to be no method of measuring intervention outcomes. There appeared to be no criteria for measuring the effectiveness of shelter programs.

The seven proposed essential criteria for determining the effectiveness of shelter programs for battered women require further validation.

This study has implications for (1) funding agencies, (2) those wanting to improve existing shelter programs, (3) those wanting to establish new shelter programs, and (4) health educators.

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"Criteria for Determining the Effectiveness of Shelter Programs for Battered Women."

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